

*The Duty of bearing one ano-
ther's Burdens.*

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE

A S O C I E T Y

O F

W E A V E R S, &c.

I N T H E

P A R I S H C H U R C H

O F

B O L T O N,

On *Wednesday*, the 4th of *January*,
1774.

By E. WHITEHEAD, A. M. Vicar of BOLTON.

*Published at the Request, and for the Benefit of the
said Society.*

M A N C H E S T E R :

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To the MEMBERS of the
Society of Weavers, &c.

Whose BOX is kept at the *Horse-Shoe*,
in BOLTON.

THIS Discourse wrote with a
View to your Advantage, and
published at your Request, is with
great Cordiality presented by

Your affectionate Pastor,

Friend,

and Servant,

E. WHITEHEAD.

The

The Author's Preface.

ABOUT Twenty Years ago, at the Request of the then Members of a *Society of Weavers, and other Manufacturers in BOLTON*, I published a *SERMON*, recommending the Practice of *early Industry*; and pointing out the Utility of such *prudent and charitable Associations* as theirs, both to themselves and the Public.

The favourable Reception which this Discourse met with amongst my Neighbours, and the late *great Increase of Societies* of the like Kind, induces me to hope that it was not without its Use: And I flatter myself that the present Publication, which inculcates the practice of several Duties of the greatest Importance to Persons in the lower Stations of Life, may also prove in some Degree beneficial. If it falls into the Hands of but a few poor Persons, either in my own, or the neighbouring Parishes, who by reading it are prevail'd upon to become more *provident, industrious, sober, and good*, I shall think my Labour hath not been in vain.

Convinced of the great Advantage of these *Societies*, and of the Expediency, in order to their better Regulation, of having some Persons of Property and Influence incorporated with the poorer Sort; I, many Years ago, entered myself a Member of that before which the following Sermon was preached. I found in it a few *public-spirited Gentlemen and Tradesmen*, who had become Members on the like Motive, and several more have joined us since. Our Body is now increased to *Three Hundred*, and our Capital is pretty considerable.

Some of our *æconomical* Rules are these; the Members meet *quarterly* at a reputable public House, and

club their Two Pence, and at the same Time pay in-
to the Hands of the proper Officers *One Shilling* each,
which is deposited in the Society's Box; if a Mem-
ber sends his Money, his Attendance is dispensed
with, unless he be in Office; the Offices are served
by the Members in Rotation; when any poor Mem-
ber is sick, lame, or the like, on Notice given to
the Stewards they visit him, and during his Illness or
Inability to work, pay him *four Shillings* weekly;
and if his Illness proves mortal, his Widow, or Re-
presentative receives *Thirty Shillings* out of the Box
to defray his Funeral Expences. The rest of the
Rules, which are printed and in the Hands of every
Member, are calculated to promote Peace, Order,
Good-fellowship, and Morality.

There are *Five* other Societies (or *Boxes* as they
are generally called) consisting of Persons of various
Trades, within the Town of *Bolton*; and several more
in its Neighbourhood. Upon Examination I find
that the present Amount of the Members of the *Six*
Bolton Boxes is upwards of *Twelve Hundred*, most of
them Heads of Families.

In this populous County the Poor-tax in general
runs high: And I have learnt from long Experience,
that the greatest and most disagreeable Part of a Ma-
gistrate's Labour consists, in hearing and determining
Complaints and Disputes between Paupers and their
Overseers. But very rarely, indeed, have Complaints
of this Sort been brought before me by any of the
Members of these *Boxes*. May we not hence infer,
that if proper Encouragement was given to these In-
stitutions, so as to render them more *general*, there
would be good Grounds to indulge the pleasing
Hope, that in the Course of a few Years, many Pa-
rishes would be eased of their present grievous Burden;
the Magistrates Labour be lessened; and the Poor
in general more comfortable, contented, and happy?

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A Bill was brought into Parliament the last Sessions by some patriotic Members, to impower Parishes to grant *Annuities* to poor Persons at a certain Time of Life; on Condition of their receiving certain stipulated Sums out of the Wages or Gains of as many of their industrious Poor as were willing in *Youth*, to make such a prudent Provision for *Old-Age*.

How the Bill came to miscarry I know not; but humbly submit it to public Consideration, whether Establishments something similar to those I am pleading for (wherein not only helpless Old Age is succoured and relieved, but Sickness and every other Distress that can happen to a poor Family, greatly alleviated) if set on foot in every populous Part of the Kingdom, under the Patronage of Persons of Fortune, might not in some Measure, answer the End proposed; or at least prove useful Substitutes, till Government shall adopt some more generous Plan, for encouraging and rewarding the industrious and deserving Poor.



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S E R M O N, &c.

Galatians, vi. 2.

*Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so
fulfil the Law of Christ.*

BENEVOLENCE and Charity, mutual Affection and brotherly Love, stand first in the List of moral Virtues : They are the most striking and pleasing Features in the human Character, and distinguish us perhaps more than any thing else from the *Brute-Creation*, which is in general selfish and cruel, preying upon and devouring one another.

No Wonder, therefore, that the great Founder of our Religion, who came into the World as well to *instruct* and *reform*, as to *redeem* Mankind, made *Love* and *Charity* the distinguishing Characteristic of his Disciples.

The Pattern set by their divine Master has been exactly copied both by Evangelists and Apostles in their Writings; and his Precepts were remarkably observed by the first Converts to Christianity.

As most of the Apostolic Epistles breathe nothing else but Love, Peace, Concord, Compassion, Long-suffering, and Charity, so the Church of *Christ* on its first Establishment, appears to have been cemented and bound together by these God-like Graces.

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Its Members, *St. Luke* tells us,* were all of one Heart and of one Soul; none among them sought so much his own as his Neighbour's Welfare, and if one Member suffered, each one looked upon it as his Duty to suffer with him. They threw all their respective Capitals into one common Stock, to be distributed according as each one had need; and it was a saying, in a Manner proverbial amongst their Enemies and Persecutors, See how these Christians Love one another!

When the Gospel had spread itself, and different Churches were planted in different Provinces, the particular Branch of Charity, which related to the Relief and Support of the Poor and Needy, was put upon a more regular and stable Footing.

Thus we find it an early Custom in the Church of *Corinth*, † appointed by *St. Paul* himself; for each Member to lay by out of his weekly Gains, a certain Sum for the Support of such Bretheren, who thro' Sicknels or other Misfortunes were unable to maintain themselves.

And the same Apostle hath told us, that he had given the like Order to the Churches of *Galatia*; § And it is highly probable, that this Address in my Text was meant as well to encourage the *Galatians* to persevere in this truly charitable Measure; as to prevail on them to bear with each other's Failings, and to do all in their power to render every Misfortune and Affliction in Life, as light and supportable as might be to their suffering Bretheren; that they shou'd, on all Occasions, be ready to bear one another's Burdens, thereby fulfilling the Law of Christ.

It cannot, I should imagine, but be a Ground of pleasing Reflection to each Member of the Society here

* Acts, iv. 32.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

here assembled, to find that they have so early, and so noble a Christian Pattern for their Institution.

That whilst they are taking such Measures as common Prudence itself would suggest to provide against the *evil Day* the Infirmities and Misfortunes of this uncertain Life; they are at the same Time doing a Work acceptable to God, useful to the Community, and agreeable to the Practice of the Times of *purest Christianity*.

It is with *singular Pleasure* that I am called upon annually to meet you in this Place; to join you in paying our Adorations to the God of Heaven, and in begging the Continuance of his Blessing upon your honest Undertakings: *And let it be my further Task at present, to encourage you to proceed in the good Road that you have set out; And to persuade you to have an Eye to a future and better World, whilst you are providing against the Dangers of this; that being armed either for Life or Death, you may equally be prepared to encounter Affliction and Misfortune; and to launch forth with a quiet Conscience into a happy Eternity.*

Had not the Experience of many Years sufficiently convinced us, of the Propriety and Utility of this and other like Establishments, in order to promote *brotherly Love*, and a friendly Intercourse between Neighbours; besides their principal Intention, *the bearing one another's Burdens*, when grown too heavy for the Individual to sustain, much, very much might be said in their Behalf.

What Numbers could I recount, Members of this and other Societies whom when overtaken by Sickness, Age, or Accident, the *seasonable Relief* of their Boxes, like the provident Bee's Summer Store, hath saved from impending Misery and Ruin? Whilst

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others dissipated, idle, and improvident have, when in the like Circumstances, either perished thro' Want, and entail'd Misery on their wretched Offspring; or been forced to pass the Remainder of their Days in the Filth and Penury of a parish Cell?

With what Pleasure may you, my fellow Members, look forward to the Years that are to come? With what Joy contemplate your own happy Lot? Who have a *goodly Heritage* of your own to support you in the decline of Life; independent of uncertain Friends; of Relations or Children without Bowels; of the seldom flowing Charity of the humane; or the scanty legal Allowance of the Town's Overseer.

How often, how very often to one in my Station do melancholy and pitious Objects present themselves; Persons wasted with Sickness, bowed down with Years, whose Applications to their respective Officers for Relief have been fruitless; whose former Idleness, Improvidence, and Drunkenness have been brought to their Remembrance, and urged as Reasons, but too plausible, for their being neglected or overlooked in their Distress?

Nay, how happy would many a worthy and virtuous old Man think himself, who with much Care and Industry has brought up a numerous Family; lived a Credit to his Station; and been a useful Member of Society; could he, when the Infirmities of Age have rendered him unfit for Labour, have the same indulgent Provision granted him by his Parish as each Member of these Boxes is intitled to?

As these are Reasons sufficient to induce every Person in dependent Circumstances, who is blessed with the smallest Degree of Prudence, to enter himself early in one of these provident Societies; so are they likewise to influence Men of Wealth and Property

perty to patronize them, and to give them every Encouragement and Assistance in their Power.

This is a Conduct which *Self-interest* alone might direct such who never feel for others to practice ; but which I trust many will pursue upon far more generous and noble Motives ; as Friends to Society, as Lovers of Mankind, and who wish to promote the real Good and Happiness of all whom Providence has placed beneath them, their poor Neighbours, Servants, and Dependants.

To make all Mankind happy both in this World and in the next, is all that *Charity* herself can aim at ; it is a Disposition or Attribute truly divine ; God himself intends no other in the various Dispensations of his Providence ; and it was what caused the Son of his Love to leave the Bosom of his Father, and to descend from the Mansions of Bliss into this miserable sinful World. Whoever, therefore, enters into these friendly Associations with a truly benevolent Intention, abstracted from all selfish Views ; who wishes principally to encourage Industry and Economy in others ; who feels for every Affliction that can befall the wretched ; who knows no greater Pleasure than in supporting the weak, in relieving the sick, in healing the broken-hearted, in being a Prop to the tottering Limbs of the Aged, and a Consolation to every Child of Sorrow ; acts the good and godlike Part, is *a Son of the Most High*, and treads in the Steps of the Saviour of Mankind, who *loved us, even unto Death*.

And whatever of *Prudence* may be connected with the *benevolent Views* of the Bulk of Members who thus associate ; yet the very Intention of doing it *to bear one another's Burdens* ; to support mutually each other in their Afflictions ; to prevent that Want and Misery which their Children and Families must other-

wife sustain when deprived of their Labour, is a Temper of Mind truly Christian, and the Offspring of a Virtue which *Charity* cannot but own and embrace as one of her nearest Kindred,

By nothing whatsoever are the Seeds of Benevolence and Christian Love more effectually cherished, than by an Exchange of good Offices ; by visiting each other in Sickness ; by assisting, comforting, and condoling with those, whom we expect in their Turn to be equally ready to repay the Obligation, in relieving, comforting, and condoling with us.

And as it is evident that no small Portion of the Evils to which the poor Man's Condition is subject, proceed from the Want of Peaceableness, Cordiality, Affection, and brotherly Love amongst Neighbours and Persons of the same Trade and Profession ; it is highly incumbent upon Men in general, and more especially upon such Societies as ours to encourage, by every Kind of Cultivation, the Growth of these heavenly Virtues.

There cannot be a more mischievous Creature let loose upon the World, than a Man of Fortune devoid of Charity, Good-nature, and Humanity ; and the like Pests of Society, less mischievous only thro' Want of Ability, are the proud, the haughty, the selfish, the censorious, the uncharitable in the lower Ranks of Life : Instead of easing their Neighbours Burdens, they are Day by Day increasing them ; by creating Quarrels and Contentions ; by propagating and spreading ill Reports ; and by withholding every little Kindness, every Office of Friendship which help to soften the Rigour of the poor Man's Lot, and to smoothe the many rugged Paths he has to tread.

Well might the Psalmist exclaim in those rapturous heartfelt Strains, *O how good and joyful a Thing*

Thing it is Brethren to dwell together in Unity! * We daily experience the Truth of his Observation when apply'd either to private Families, or to the greater or lesser Societies of Men. It is not only the strongest and most durable Cement of all Compacts, but (in the Language of the same sweet Songster) the richest Cordial and only Balm of Life; more refreshing to us in our Pilgrimage thro' the World, than the soft Dews of Hermon, or the cooling Springs of Sion, to the parch'd and weary Traveller: And in whatever Station or Condition we are placed, without Friendship and mutual Love, Honours are insipid, Wealth useless, Poverty insupportable, and Life a Burden.

If, before we quit this Subject, I carry your Thoughts into a future State, and put you upon enquiring who they are whom the Son of God pronounces to *be blessed of the Father*, and who will at the last Day be called upon to *inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the Foundation of the World*. † These, his Gospel tells you, are such who have in their Life Time copied after the *Father of Mercies* in Works of Compassion, Love and Kindness; who observing their divine Master's Precepts, have been devout and harmless, charitable and good, and done every Thing in their Power to promote the Ease and Happiness of all around them.

And who, on the other Hand are they who will undergo that dreadful Denunciation of the Almighty, *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; these the same Gospel informs you are such who whilst in Life, were steeled against all Sensibility of foreign Distress; who were too selfish to act for the Good or Interest of any Objects but themselves; who were uncharitable and unmerciful, and who *like their Father the Devil went about seeking,* not

* Psalm cxxxiii, 1.

† Matthew xxv, 34, &c.

not whom they might *benefit*, but *whom they might devour*.

Enough I trust has been said to induce us to *love Mankind in general*; let us turn our Attention now to a few of those domestic Duties, which Prudence, or *Self-love*, from Persons in your Stations, more immediately calls for.

And 1st. If you love *yourselves*, you must love your Wives and Children which are *Part of yourselves*; and this suggests to you the Demand they have upon your *Labour and Industry*, in order to make a decent and comfortable Provision for them.

Indeed no Man living can plead a Right to be *idle*; it is contrary to one of the first Laws of God; Labour is our Lot, but such a Lot as is capable of being improved to the most beneficial Purposes, respecting ourselves, our Families, and Society.

It is Industry, with the divine Blessing accompanying it, that must provide for your little Ones *Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on*; that must accommodate yourselves with all the Necessaries and decent Comforts of Life; and which can enable you to Taste one of the greatest Pleasures which the human Heart is sensible of, the Pleasure of benefiting and relieving others.

Accordingly the Apostle exhorts such poor Persons, whose Abilities are not equal to their kind Wishes, to *labour working with their Hands the Thing that is good*, § that they may enjoy this singular Felicity of *having to give to him that needeth*.

And to deter Men from the baneful and destructive Vice of Idleness, he in another Place declares, that

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he that provideth not for his own, and specially for those of his own House, hath deny'd the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. †

As therefore you would not, instead of enjoying the god-like Pleasure of doing good, bring yourselves and Families to depend upon the Mercy and Charity of others; as you would not incur the infamous Character of being Drones in the Creation; of being Assassins to your Children, and Rebels to your God, resolve *before the Day is far spent*; in your young and healthful Days to be diligent and industrious; to acquit yourselves like Men, in doing your Duty in that State of Life unto which it hath pleased God to call you.

And in order to make yourselves still more independent to provide better for your Families, and to be more useful in your Generation; to the Aid of *Industry*, call in her Sister Virtue *Frugality*; which latter will enable you to preserve and keep together what the former hath acquired.

If in this Age of Luxury and Dissipation you look up into the Ranks of Life above you, you will perceive the bad consequences of Extravagance and want of *Œconomy*, in the many wretched Shifts, and mean Expedients, which even Men born to large Estates are forced to make use of, in order to raise Money to support their Pride; how often they barter Truth, Honour, and Conscience for the Means to repair a broken Fortune, and sell their Prince, their Country, and themselves for Gold.

You will as you descend, see too many also in a lower Sphere affecting to live above their Income; who eat, and drink, and dress as if possessed of inexhaustible Mines of Wealth; and you will observe
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† 1 Tim. v. 8.

what this foolish Mode and Fashion tends to, and in what it generally ends ; in Repentance, Shame and Sorrow ; in Bankruptcy and Beggary.

Turn your Eyes now and take a View of your own Conduct, and of others in your Station of Life. The Man who labours hard and lives frugally, sees his Children healthy and well clad, and constant cleanliness and Plenty in his Dwelling; he is never distress'd when Sickness or Misfortune overtakes him, having taken Care to lay up something against this *evil Day*; Year by Year he finds his little *Store increasing*, and his *Basket filling*; the Blessing of Heaven, the good Providence of God never failing to accompany his honest Endeavours ; and a chearful, a healthy, and a happy old Age generally crowns his Days.

But observe the dissipated thoughtless Man, who spends in *one Day* the Earnings of *three* ; and in the strict and literal Sense of the Words, *takes no Thought for the Morrow*; his Family is continually distressed, and himself always poor ; his Payments being bad, his Credit is sunk and lost ; Debts and Duns abroad, and Filth and Want at Home, make each Place dismal and disgustful ; whatever he earns his Wages are not his own, being beforehand devoured by Prodigality and her Attendants ; and if Sickness or other Calamity comes upon him, farewell Independence ; farewell House and Home ; every domestic Enjoyment ; a parish Workhouse must henceforth be the melancholy Receptacle of him and his.

What generally brings on this great Distress is a Vice which in this trading Country is almost epidemical, and against which I cannot on this Occasion but think it my Duty to caution you ; you will anticipate in your own Minds the Vice I mean, which is *Intemperance* or *Drunkenness*.

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This if it were no *Crime*, is a Practice as opposite to what Frugality or Œconomy would recommend, as Light is to Darkneſs, and the utmoſt Exertions of both Art and Induſtry cannot build as faſt as it demolishes.

It is indeed an Obſervation as juſt as it is common, that the moſt ingenious Artificers, and the hardeſt working People are of all others the moſt addicted to this deſtructive Vice; a ſhocking and moſt unjuſt Application of thoſe Abilities with which God has bleſs'd them, and which might be productive of ſuch great Good to themſelves, their Families, and the Community they belong to.

Let me therefore earneſtly recommend to each Member of this Society the Virtue of *Temperance*; that you would *provoke one another to it*, both by Rule, and Example, and never deviate from it at any of your Meetings either public or private.

Look upon Drunkenneſs as a Vice not only unmanly, beaſtly, and ſcandalous, but ruinous to the laſt Degree; incompatible with every domeſtic Happineſs, and deſtructive both of Body and Soul.

My *laſt* Advice to you, and tho' *laſt* not the leaſt worthy of your Notice, ſhall be in the Words of the Son of Sirach, *Whatſoever thou takeſt in Hand, remember the End.* * Whiſt you are providing againſt the Calamities of this uncertain World, do not forget that *Death* is drawing near; that the *preſent* Life is *ſhort*, the future *endleſs*; that you have Souls either to *ſave* or *loſe*; and that no Folly can equal that of purchaſing *temporal* Enjoyments, at the Expence of *eternal* ones; of being anxious for a *Day*, and regardless of *everlaſting Ages*.

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* Eccles. vii, 36.

Do not therefore *labour only for the Meat that riseth*, but for that also which *endureth to eternal Life*; embrace every Opportunity of growing *wiser and better*, pray daily for the Grace of God to guide you to Repentance, that your future Life may be regularly and uniformly Good, and *train up your Children in the Way in which they should go*; the Duties of Religion you will find (whatever you have heard said to the contrary) to be very consistent with those of your Station; and that you may at the same Time be good and pious, and diligent in your Calling. You may in the midst of your daily Employment converse with God, in Ejaculation, Prayer, and Praise; and the Sense of his Presence and Friendship will sweeten your Labour: whether at Home or abroad, in the Shop or in the Field, your *Heart may be inditing of a good Matter*; and as a Meditation on truly useful and godly Subjects will make your Work go forward with cheerfulness, so the most busy and laborious of your Hours, may by this Means be consecrated to Heaven.

Consider however the devout and solemn Observance of the *Sabbath* as a Duty *indispensible*; it was graciously appointed by God *Almighty* as the poor Man's *Day of Rest*; but a more important End of its Institution was, that it might be a Season of *Devotion* likewise, and of Edification and Improvement to him and his Family.

If therefore you spend one of these Days in Idleness or Sin, it is a Day lost to you indeed; you have broken the solemn Commandment of God, who will *not hold you guiltless*; you have neglected your Duty to your Children and Household, and hazarded the Loss of your own Souls: Perhaps you have missed an Opportunity of Instruction and Conviction which might have opened your Eyes to a just Sense of your Condition, which may never after be opened

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May such Sentiments as these be cherish'd in the
 Hearts of every one of us, that they may bring
forth in us the Fruit of good living; that we may serve
 God our great Master, at the same Time that we are
 serving ourselves and the Public; and that when we
 have done with all earthly Societies and Connections,
 we may be acknowledged Members of a better Com-
 munity; may find our Names written above, and
 be admitted into the blessed Society of Saints and
 Angels in Heaven. Which God of his Mercy
 grant, &c.

F I N I S.

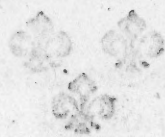


in the history of Europe and Japan you will find...

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